



General Assembly

Distr.: General

21 January 2011

Original: English

Second Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

7-8 March 2011

Synthesis Report on Best Practices and Lessons Learned on the Objective and Themes of the Conference

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

An advance unedited copy of the Synthesis Report was submitted to the first Intersessional Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in January 2011. This Report has been edited and revised to reflect additional input and views from participants to the Intersessional Meeting on the objective and themes of the Conference, and is submitted to the UNCSD Second Preparatory Committee Meeting for further consideration and discussion, as part of the UNCSD preparatory process.

* A/CONF.216/PC/1.

Contents

	Paragraph
I. Introduction.....	1 – 3
II. Renewed political commitment for sustainable development.....	4 - 23
III. Assessing progress and remaining gaps in implementation.....	24 - 44
IV. Addressing new and emerging challenges.....	45 – 59
V. A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.....	60 – 83
VI. Institutional framework for sustainable development.....	84 – 113
VII. The Way Forward.....	114 - 121

I. Introduction

1. The UNCSD Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) decided at its first meeting in May 2010 to “seek information, inputs and contributions including through a questionnaire addressed to member States, the UN system, international financial institutions (IFIs), Major Groups and other stakeholders, on their experiences including success factors, challenges and risks with respect to the objectives and themes of the Conference.” An unedited advance copy of the Synthesis Report (A/CONF.216/PC/3) was considered during the January 2011 Intersessional Meeting.
2. A total 108 responses to the questionnaire were received as of 18 January 2011. Of the 49 member States’ responses, 24 were from developed countries, including one comprehensive submission from the European Union, and 25 were from developing countries or countries with economies in transition. Responses were also received from 32 Major Groups’ organizations or consolidated networks, and from 27 UN system organizations. All responses can be accessed from the UNCSD Secretariat’s website.¹
3. This report seeks to synthesize the main messages in an objective, balanced and coherent manner based on replies to the questionnaire and other statements, as appropriate.²

II. Renewed political commitment for sustainable development

Experiences

4. High-level “ownership” of the sustainable development agenda and transparency in information sharing and decision making are key factors positively reinforcing political commitment to sustainable development.
5. Political commitment is best measured through legislation and policy at national and regional levels. Indicators such as budgetary allocation, development of institutions and stakeholder participation are strong indicators of political commitment translated into action.
6. Quantitative indicators (i.e. budgetary allocation and financial support) can be effective, but are not always easy to measure. Qualitative indicators (i.e. new policy

¹ <http://www.uncsd2012.org>

² Due to the limited replies from developing countries, efforts were made to review their statements to the Second Committee during the 65th session of the General Assembly, and to the first Intersessional Meeting.

reforms, public opinion and media interest), applied to key sustainable development priorities, allow the evaluation of the sustainability framework, highlighting conflicts and trade-offs.³ Monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms are also important. Economic indicators remain important, while others, such as equity, gender mainstreaming and stakeholder participation and comprehensive indicators (e.g. Human Development Index), are also valuable.⁴

7. Many Major Groups highlighted indicators of whether governments have institutionalized the participation and inclusion of civil society, transparency of political commitments, and whether previous commitments have been implemented. Respect for human rights, for example by adopting an instrument like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was also highly ranked.⁵ Media interest is not considered a reliable indicator by some groups due to its volatility and lack of objectivity,⁶ though its role in public awareness-raising was also recognized as important.
8. Most UN system organizations prioritized indicators for measuring peace and security, human rights, political governance and administration, economic and corporate governance and private sector development. Ratification of multilateral environmental agreements and whether a sustainable development framework takes into account the requirements of inclusive, holistic, balanced and integrated development were also seen as important.
9. Member States and UN system organizations generally reported stronger commitment to sustainable development over the past 20 years, at both national and international levels. New international and regional conventions have been adopted in the environmental field, with an estimated 500 international conventions and instruments since 1992, when the concept of sustainable development was formally recognized and placed at the heart of the Rio agenda.⁷ This expansion reflects growing awareness of the importance and urgency of sustainable development issues.⁸ However, political commitment should not be measured only by the number of adopted conventions and declarations since 1992, but also by implementation. Some acknowledged continued gaps between political commitments and actual implementation, coordination, and enforcement.⁹

³ EU comprehensive.

⁴ Ecuador

⁵ Key organizations of the Women's Major Group.

⁶ ITUC, others.

⁷ GA65 Second Committee, agenda Item 20, Statement by the G-77 and China.

⁸ EU comprehensive.

⁹ Switzerland; Pakistan, Cuba (Intersessional Meeting statements), others.

10. Implementation of international agreements is seriously constrained in many countries by lack of access to financial resources, weak commercial viability of required investments, inadequate and inappropriate human, financial, technical and institutional capacity dedicated to implementation and evaluation,¹⁰ and limited public awareness. Raising public awareness through environmental and sustainable development education and promoting sustainable lifestyles can help instil personal responsibility and commitment in individuals and communities.¹¹
11. Balance among the three pillars of sustainable development varies among countries at different stages of development and with different resource endowments. Social and economic development remains the highest priority for developing countries, and some emphasized the importance of the social dimension of sustainable development, including social empowerment, social justice and inclusion in decision making.¹² While a number of countries have made considerable progress, for many countries – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – progress remains insufficient to reach development goals related to poverty eradication.¹³ Still, progress in improving economic governance and mobilizing resources for investment is evident across the continent. South Africa’s legislation and national programmes for sustainable management of water, energy, waste, and industrial development provide inspiration for continued progress.¹⁴
12. Links between development and environment could feature more prominently in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),¹⁵ and UNCS D should aim to place the MDGs within the framework of sustainable development.¹⁶ Brazil’s recent history—including increased basic education, a drop in unemployment, strong GDP growth, a boost in agricultural production and a clear decline in deforestation rates—demonstrates success in advancing the three pillars of sustainable development in a coordinated manner.¹⁷

¹⁰ Mauritius, Caribbean SIDS Regional Synthesis Report.

¹¹ Caribbean Regional Report for the Five-Year Review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI+5); GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20: Statement by Israel.

¹² Nepal (on behalf of the LDCs), Brazil, Venezuela. Statements to UNCS D Intersessional Meeting.

¹³ ECA. See Sustainable Development Report on Africa: Five-Year Review of the Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development Outcomes in Africa (WSSD+5)
www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/sdd/documents/SDRA.pdf.

¹⁴ South Africa

¹⁵ GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20: Statement by Norway.

¹⁶ EU statement, UNCS D Intersessional Meeting.

¹⁷ Brazil

13. A shift in the political discourse on sustainable development has taken place over the past two decades, departing from issues such as sustainable housing, employment and public transport. It now focuses more on climate change, CO₂ reductions, industry shifts and renewable energy. As for climate change, there is consensus around the need for catastrophe planning, disaster risk reduction and adaptation/mitigation strategies.¹⁸ Because many developed member States have yet to achieve the internationally agreed target of 0.7 percent of gross national income (GNI) for Official Development Assistance (ODA), and because political declarations do not always lead to actual policies, scepticism was voiced by some as to whether political commitment is adequate.¹⁹

Success Factors

14. Political support has manifested itself at the international level through the proliferation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); at the regional and sub-regional levels, through political alliances and partnerships such as the African Union and its development of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Global Island Partnerships, the Caribbean Community, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the Pacific Island Forum; at the national level, through national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs), national sustainable development councils (NSDCs), and increased inter-Ministerial coordination; and at local level, through Local Agendas 21 and similar community programmes, including increased support for Major Groups.
15. Formulation and implementation of NSDSs or their equivalents, inter-ministerial and other coordinating mechanisms, and establishment of Sustainable Development Ministries,²⁰ offices or focal entities in some countries reflect growing political support for sustainable development by integrating sustainable development dimensions into public policy and increasing the participation of relevant stakeholders in its creation and implementation.
16. Green workplace initiatives, green procurement, green growth, green investing,²¹ green taxes,²² eco-labelling, increased social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility, improved access to drinking water and sanitation, development of and investment in renewable energy technologies, including through feed-in tariffs and carbon offsets under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), carbon

¹⁸ Stakeholder Forum

¹⁹ GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20, Statements by Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, India, Philippines.

²⁰ Australia

²¹ Caribbean Regional Report for MSI+5.

²² Sweden

emissions trading, activities surrounding the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, public campaigns addressing climate change, and recognition of indigenous rights were all cited by various respondents as manifestations of increased political and policy support for sustainable development.

17. Specific industry sectors or thematic areas where national political commitment to achieve sustainable development goals was cited as especially strong include energy, climate change, MDGs, sustainable water management, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable tourism,²³ forests and deforestation,²⁴ and natural resource and biodiversity protection. Political commitment to the development of renewable energy has been encouraging in a number of countries, including through green stimulus spending.²⁵ Some noted specific commitments to wind energy,²⁶ addressing water and air pollution,²⁷ waste management,²⁸ sustainable communities,²⁹ increasing opportunities for socially vulnerable people to participate in the labour market³⁰, education³¹, and combating HIV/AIDS.³² In some countries, national initiatives to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities (e.g. the Indian Forest Law) have triggered formal recognition of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples and local communities over forests and other ecosystems, and consolidation of traditional sustainable management practices.³³
18. UN System organizations highlighted support for human health, food and agriculture, sustainable urban planning/transport, forests, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). One organization noted good examples of national level or federally supported policies, programmes and laws promoting local action for biodiversity in Austria, Belgium, Brazil, South Africa and Spain.³⁴
19. Support for climate change action and for the MDGs is interlinked with support for sustainable development, as are campaigns to reduce child labour, enhance human

²³ GA65 Second Committee General Debate, statement by Gabon; GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20, statement by the Gambia.

²⁴ Caribbean Regional Report for MSI+5.

²⁵ GA65 Second Committee, General Debate, Statement by Ethiopia.

²⁶ Scotland and Germany, as noted by the European Students' Forum.

²⁷ Czech Republic, Poland, ESCAP.

²⁸ Lithuania

²⁹ Ireland, Japan, Sustainable Development Commission, UNEP

³⁰ Lithuania

³¹ Tanzania

³² Botswana, UNAIDS.

³³ Key organizations of the Women's Major Group.

³⁴ UN HABITAT

rights and equality, combat HIV/AIDS, and respond to natural disasters.³⁵ The responses of the global community to recent global crises—financial, food, energy—were reasonably successful, and should generate responses to long-term crises that will determine the sustainability of growth and development.³⁶

Challenges

20. The highest priorities mentioned for accelerating progress toward sustainable development over the coming decade include: achieving the MDGs and other development goals; securing a global agreement on climate change; promoting a fair transition to a green economy, including increased energy efficiency and use of renewable energy; protecting biodiversity, including fisheries; promoting good environmental governance; and mainstreaming education for sustainable development. Human and indigenous rights, social protection, decent work for all, and empowering youth and women were also mentioned.
21. Respondents stressed policy coherence³⁷ and establishing mutually reinforcing commitments, including a clear post-2015 framework that has sustainable development at its core;³⁸ research on combating the effects of climate change, including on aquatic ecosystems;³⁹ and ensuring support for communities in implementing Local Agendas 21.⁴⁰ Developed countries must take concrete steps to fulfil commitments on increasing financial assistance, reducing and cancelling debt, curbing trade barriers, opening markets, transferring technology and building capacity in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).⁴¹
22. International preparations for UNCSO should strengthen support for sustainable development by, *inter alia*: renewing political commitment, reforming institutional responses, providing a platform for exchanging best practices and lessons learned, supporting national priorities through technical and financial assistance, coordinating resources, and intensifying cooperation among regions through comprehensive, multi-level and multi-stakeholder processes.⁴²

³⁵ Botswana, ITUC.

³⁶ World Bank

³⁷ ITUC, European Trade Union Confederation, WWF.

³⁸ EU (Statement to Intersessional Meeting), WWF, Global EcoVillage Network.

³⁹ World Aquarium and Conservation for the Oceans Foundation.

⁴⁰ Global EcoVillage Network.

⁴¹ Nepal on behalf of LDCs, statement to Intersessional Meeting.

⁴² EU comprehensive.

Risks

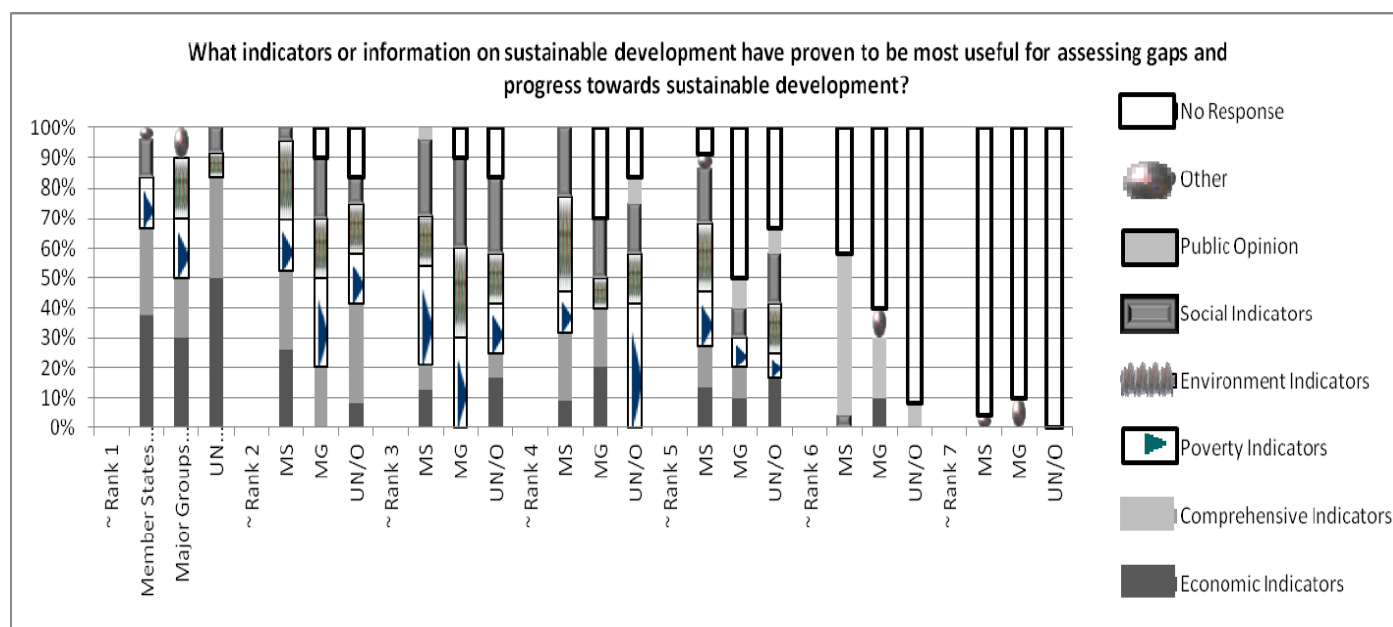
23. There can be difficult trade-offs among the three pillars of sustainable development, and yet, they can be strongly complementary. The most prominent arguments against environmental regulation and initiatives claim little or no economic benefit, or that the economic costs are too high, but these arguments rarely consider the costs of externalities or future costs, effectively devaluing the environmental pillar and the welfare of future generations.⁴³

III. Assessing progress and remaining gaps in implementation

Experiences

24. Comprehensive assessments based on development of core indicators were provided by many respondents.⁴⁴ Economic indicators were ranked as most useful, followed closely by comprehensive, poverty, environment and social indicators (Figure 1). Outcome indicators were ranked as the most useful indicators of integrated goals and strategies (Figure 2). One member State highlighted the informal OECD benchmark indicator that a nation should spend 1.5-2 percent of GDP to achieve a clean and green economy.⁴⁵

Figure 1

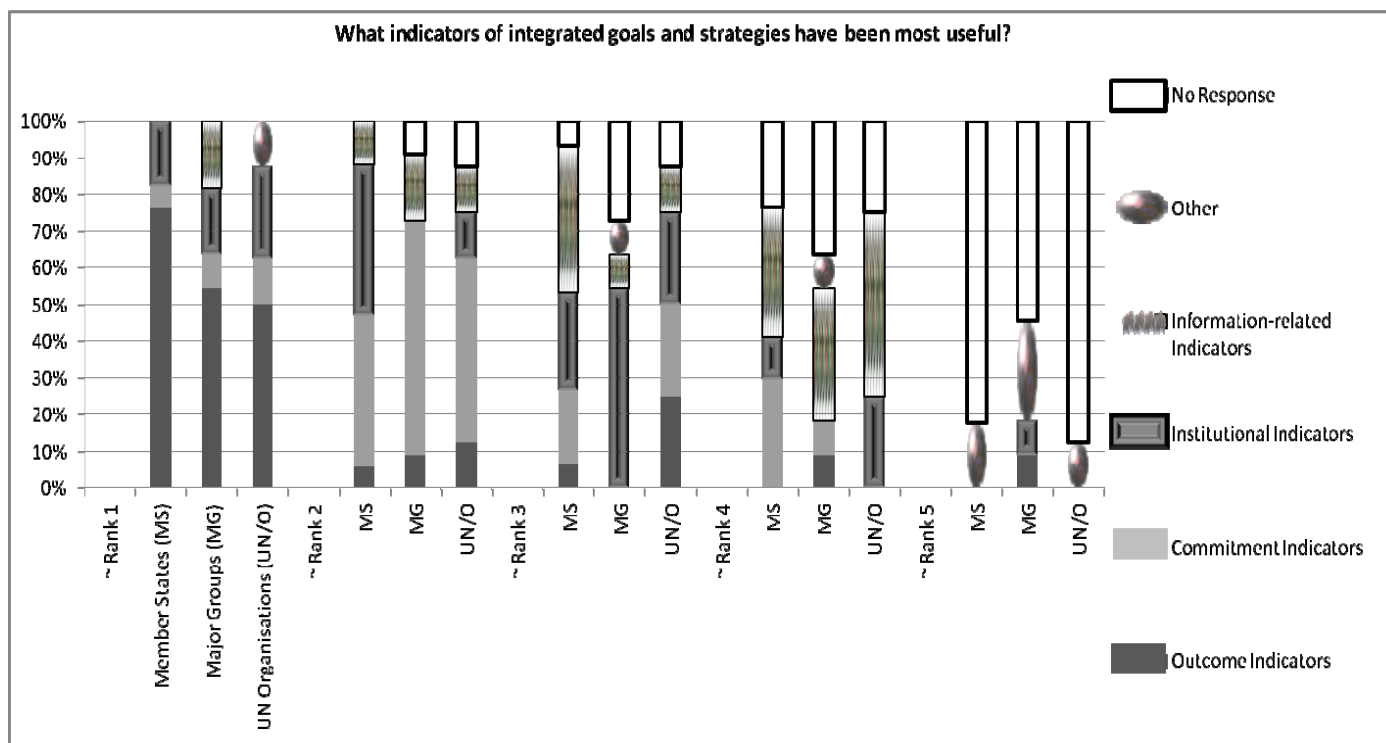


⁴³ Children and Youth Major Group through UNCSD Youth Caucus.

⁴⁴ All studies are referenced in the online annex of responses at www.uncsd2012.org.

⁴⁵ USA

Figure 2



25. Based in part on such indicators, progress has been recorded in the overall integration of sustainable development principles into economic and social policy development, the development of renewable energy technologies and infrastructure,⁴⁶ and the inclusion and protection of the rights of women and indigenous peoples. Member States mostly cited studies measuring progress in implementing NSDS and specific policies and measures at the national level. Most UN System organizations, including the regional commissions, catalogued studies on progress through global and regional efforts to achieve the MDGs; monitor progress in energy, agriculture, and biodiversity; assess the state of the global environment, such as UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) Reports⁴⁷; and implement regional programmes such as NEPAD⁴⁸ and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre.⁴⁹

26. The global financial and economic crisis caused setbacks to progress made in poverty eradication. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia still remain far from the

⁴⁶ USA; GA65 General Debate, statements by Ethiopia, Kenya and Peru; GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20, statement by UAE.

⁴⁷ UNEP, http://www.unep.org/geo/GEO_Meetings.asp.

⁴⁸ ECA response.

⁴⁹ Caribbean Regional Report for MSI+5.

2015 target.⁵⁰ However, notable progress has been made in India where the population share below the national poverty line fell from 36 percent in 1993-94 to 25 percent in 2009, with micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) providing employment to about 60 million and contributing to about 8 percent of GDP. The largest flagship programme to tackle rural poverty is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MG-NREGS), providing employment security for the rural poor by guaranteeing one hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year.⁵¹

27. The 2010 UN MDG Summit concluded that developing countries as a group have had successes in realizing some targets, including improving school enrolment and child health, and expanding access to clean water. Yet, progress has been uneven among regions and between and within countries. Hunger and malnutrition rose from 2007 through 2009, reversing prior gains, and food prices are rising again. There have been slow progress and setbacks in reaching full and productive employment and decent work for all, advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, achieving environmental sustainability and providing basic sanitation.⁵²
28. The Nagoya 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) resulted in a number of important initiatives, including the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, and established clear steps to increase cooperation among the Rio Conventions leading up to the UNCS D in 2012.
29. Some countries have made considerable progress in slowing the rate of deforestation since the adoption of the Forest Principles in Rio and the establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). Norway and Indonesia have been at the forefront of a group of countries that have launched a global initiative to reduce deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), with \$3.5 billion in pledged financing so far. Brazil reported that the Amazon's deforestation rate over the past year was the slowest in 22 years and expressed its determination to continue to slow it.
30. Under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), member States succeeded in brokering agreements covering mitigation, adaptation, deforestation, financing and technology transfer in 2010. Developed countries are reportedly fulfilling their promise to contribute USD30 billion in "fast-start" funding in the next three years. Particularly important for developing countries was the creation of

⁵⁰ UN, *MDG Report 2010*.

⁵¹ India

⁵² MDG Summit 2010 Outcome Document, A/65/L.1.

<http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/mdg%20outcome%20document.pdf>.

a framework to enhance action on adaptation and mechanisms to facilitate technology transfer.

31. The World Water Forums, organized by the World Water Council, have served to catalyze political interest and commitment to address water issues directly related to sustainable development. The Global Water Partnership has also promoted integrated water resources management (IWRM) through its extensive regional and country-level networks.⁵³
32. Progress in information access rights (Rio Principle 10) has been recorded by the World Resources Institute and its Access Initiative partners.⁵⁴ Community-level “social audits” of poverty-related spending in India, recently given official backing in one Indian state, demonstrate the potential power of information in the hands of the poor.⁵⁵

Success factors

33. Use of integrated strategies and investment in institutional and technical capacity are rated equally highly in explaining progress in implementation (Figure 3). Most countries have introduced integrated planning and decision making for sustainable development through NSDSs, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and other strategies or plans, and most are supported by UN System organizations, particularly the Regional Commissions, and IFIs. Regardless of the different tools or titles used, integrated planning and decision making are essential for progress.⁵⁶

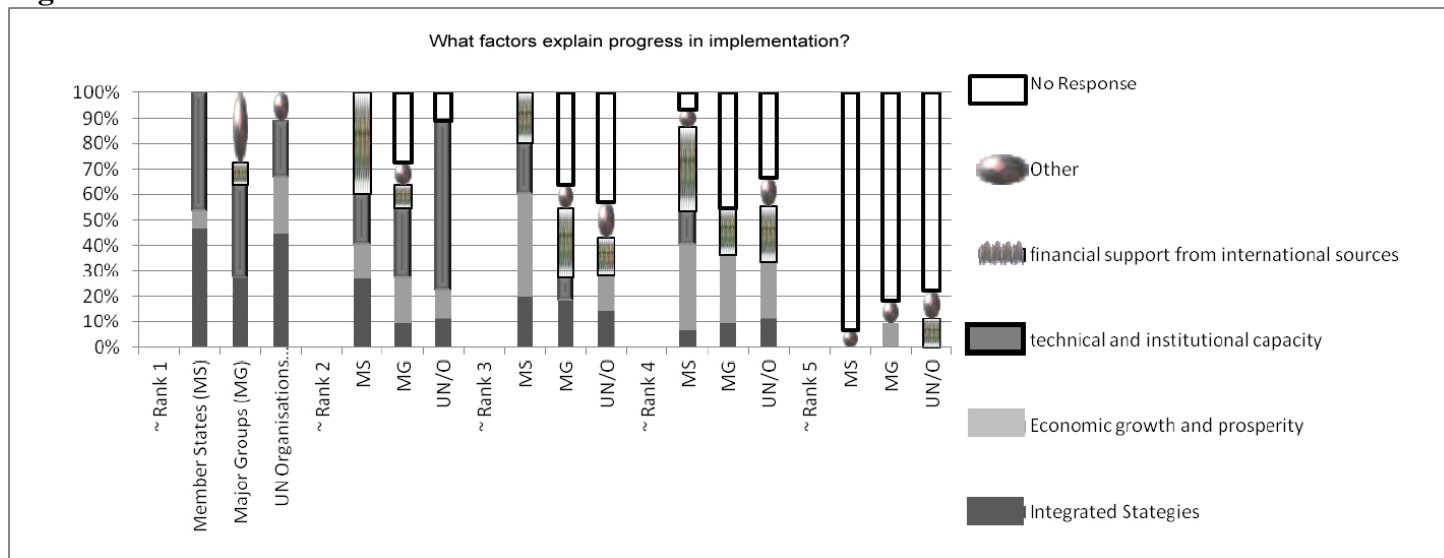
⁵³ UNESCO

⁵⁴ The Access Initiative

⁵⁵ L. Polgreen, “Indian State Empowers Poor to Fight Corruption”, *NYT*, 3 Dec. 2010.

⁵⁶ ICSU

Figure 3



34. In many developing countries, the Ministries of environment and health have little input in the development of PRSPs and vulnerable groups are often not involved.⁵⁷ One regional commission noted that PRSPs currently reinforce a preoccupation with short-term poverty reduction interventions, paying little attention to intergenerational equity considerations, and advised countries to develop NSDDs to be implemented in stages taking into account short, medium and long-term development objectives.⁵⁸ UNDP and UNEP highlighted cooperation under the Poverty and Environment Initiative to integrate environment in national poverty reduction and economic development strategies in countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific.⁵⁹

35. Public-private partnerships are promoted in various forms by many countries, emphasizing corporate social responsibility in some cases. A number of responses highlighted involvement in UN Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Member States most often cited public-private partnerships in public service delivery such as waste management, water, energy and transport. The Clean Technology Fund with USD4.5 billion in concessional finance is expected to be mobilizing co-financing of about USD35 billion, including USD12 billion from the private sector.⁶⁰ One respondent noted with concern that partnerships for provision of public services

⁵⁷ Key organizations of the Women's Major Group

⁵⁸ ECA

⁵⁹ <http://www.unpei.org/>.

⁶⁰ World Bank

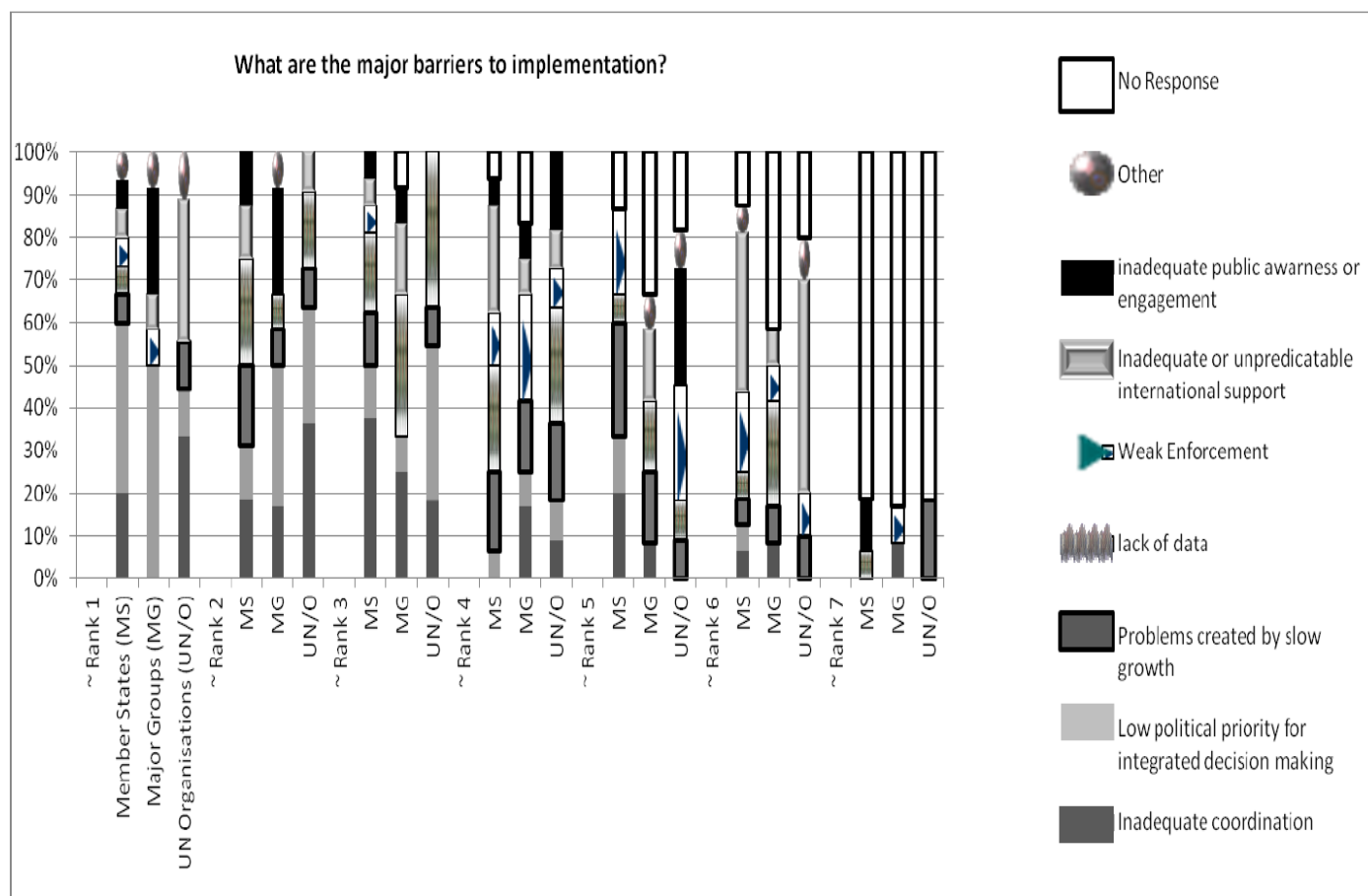
such as water or energy have often led to reduced quality of service provision and corruption.⁶¹

36. Technical assistance from the UN system is important for many developing countries, and can be especially helpful for agriculture, biodiversity, water, energy, and climate change. Many Major Groups also benefit from such assistance.

Challenges

37. “Low political priority for integrated decision making” was ranked by the majority of member States and Major Groups as the biggest barrier to implementation. The majority of UN System organizations ranked “inadequate coordination between ministries” and “inadequate or unpredictable international support” equally as the biggest barriers to implementation (Figure 4).

Figure 4



⁶¹ ITUC, <http://www.psir.org/>.

38. Many different steps could be taken to bridge implementation gaps, with efforts increasing political will and commitment, improving coordination at all levels, increasing awareness, communicating with the public and providing information ranking highest. Actions should also continue to ensure the use of economic instruments contributing to market transparency and shaping prices which reflect the real economic, social and environmental costs of activities. Some member States noted the need to take action to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies.⁶² One member State said that disparities between the trade regimes and multilateral environmental agreements, such as those between the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) regime and the CBD regarding patenting genetic resources, need to be thoroughly addressed.⁶³ Another stated that not all countries perceive such disparities.⁶⁴
39. At the regional and sub-regional levels, efforts to promote collective action on key political and economic issues, together with accelerated regional economic integration, would also help bridge implementation gaps, as would increasing accountability and transparency, basic good governance skills, and peace and stability.⁶⁵
40. Limited technical capacity and financial resources are recurrent challenges to effective implementation. The resource needs for HIV prevention, AIDS care and treatment and impact mitigation, for example, constitute a significant proportion of GNI in the highest burden countries of sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁶ SIDS reported that severe constraints in monitoring and evaluating sustainable development progress due to lack of national disaggregated data systems and weak analytical capabilities.
41. The main difficulties experienced in promoting integrated planning and decision-making include lack of transparency in decision-making process on development, lack of public participation in planning processes, lack of coordination among government Ministries and agencies with competing priorities, and lack of human resources and technology capacity. Some vulnerable member States highlighted the impact of environmental degradation and pollution as a primary challenge,⁶⁷ while others noted difficulties for some decision-makers to look at issues from a long-term viewpoint,⁶⁸ while trade-offs exist among sectoral authorities' objectives.⁶⁹

⁶² Poland, Argentina

⁶³ India

⁶⁴ Japan, statement to Intersessional Meeting.

⁶⁵ ESCWA, Republic of Korea (Statement to GA65 Second Committee).

⁶⁶ UNAIDS

⁶⁷ Caribbean Regional Report for MSI+5.

⁶⁸ World Aquarium and Conservation for the Oceans Foundation.

⁶⁹ ITUC

Unclear mandates, low accountability and the absence of institutional mechanisms for joint work and collaboration all exacerbate these problems, also found in the UN system.⁷⁰

42. Implementation of NSDSs and similar strategies and plans must be given much higher priority, while investment in science and technology for sustainable development must be significantly stepped up.⁷¹ Institutional and financial support of Major Groups' initiatives (e.g. Education for Sustainable Development, Local Agenda 21) would also enhance implementation.⁷²
43. Further actions could be taken to promote partnerships for sustainable development and provide support to umbrella stakeholder organizations to facilitate more effective participation.⁷³ Instruments of corporate social responsibility should be promoted more actively,⁷⁴ as should links between business and sustainable development.⁷⁵ Better education for sustainable development could significantly contribute to shaping conditions for promotion of partnerships.⁷⁶

Risks

44. The main risks include: a focus on economic growth to the exclusion of other issues; vested economic and industry interests in various sectors (energy, agriculture, mining); lack of shared vision; weak leadership; failure to reach agreement in multilateral negotiations, particularly on trade and climate change; failure to deliver on existing commitments, especially regarding ODA; poor integration of and coherence among different strategies; increased natural and global disasters affecting the world's most vulnerable people; and political conflict.

⁷⁰ WWF

⁷¹ ICSU

⁷² Hungary

⁷³ Belgium, Global EcoVillage Network, others.

⁷⁴ Switzerland, Poland

⁷⁵ UN HABITAT

⁷⁶ Czech Republic

IV. Addressing new and emerging challenges

Experiences

45. All countries face many similar challenges, but differ widely in their ability to cope with risks and shocks. Challenges have been exacerbated in developing countries by poverty, competition for scarce resources, rapid rural to urban migration, and the concomitant challenges to provide food, infrastructure and access to basic health, water and energy services.
46. While there have been important economic benefits of global market integration through trade and investment, there are also increased economic risks, for example from greater financial market interdependence. Greater economic interdependence requires stronger cooperation in addressing resultant sustainable development challenges.⁷⁷
47. High levels of vulnerability of the environmental, economic and social systems of SIDS were highlighted in the recent five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States (MSI+5). SIDS have made little progress, or even regressed, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability.
48. New and emerging challenges include: climate change and related natural disasters; interrelated financial, economic and food crises; energy security; degradation of ecosystems (particularly marine ecosystems) and diminishing natural resources including water scarcity; political instability and social unrest; unsustainable consumption and production; impacts of population growth and rapid urbanization. One member State responded that, instead of identifying new and emerging issues, the focus should remain on integrating issues and understanding their potential multiple effects.⁷⁸
49. Many types of mechanisms to address challenges at national and local levels often encompassed the same policies and programmes outlined in the assessment of progress. Other measures related specifically to disaster preparedness and early warning systems, climate change adaptation (notably in SIDS), shifting to renewable energy, and addressing water scarcity. Several member States described multidimensional approaches in disaster reduction and risk management: one achieved significant progress by establishing a socio-economic model that reduces vulnerability and invests in social capital through universal access to government

⁷⁷ Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (2008), *Lessons from global environmental assessments*, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Belgium

services and promotion of social equity;⁷⁹ another established an early warning network to alert citizens on anticipated disasters through mobile phones, constructing multi-hazard warning towers in coastal areas.⁸⁰ Public education on disasters, meteorological research, early warning systems, effective communication systems, comprehensive plans and civil defence structures are all recognized as important resources in reducing risk.⁸¹

50. Support from the international community has been forthcoming with regard to climate change, energy efficiency and security, food security, the MDGs including poverty eradication, rural development, capacity building and combating disease. Enhanced support to member States, including for institutional and policy reform, enhancing agricultural productivity, water sector development,⁸² reversing degradation of marine ecosystems,⁸³ waste management,⁸⁴ and population management⁸⁵ were cited as priorities. Inadequate attention has been given to ocean acidification,⁸⁶ with little emphasis given to providing political, legal and other support to community initiatives to conserve and restore biodiversity.⁸⁷

51. Although some agree that emerging challenges should be acted upon at UNCSD, others insisted that UNCSD should focus on the two agreed themes of the Conference.

Success factors

52. “Adequate financial resources” was ranked by nearly all as the most important factor in successfully addressing new and emerging challenges; “strong government leadership” ranked second (Figure 5). Long-term strategies, increasing South-South and regional cooperation, promotion of good governance, programmes to improve energy efficiency and energy saving, investment in infrastructure (including information technology), sustainable development awareness-raising programmes, regional cooperation on water management, and building technical capacity for data collection and monitoring are examples of steps taken to enhance success factors.

⁷⁹ GA65 Second Committee, Statement by Cuba.

⁸⁰ GA65 Second Committee, Statement by Sri Lanka.

⁸¹ India, Caribbean SIDS Regional Synthesis Report.

⁸² Tanzania

⁸³ Croatia

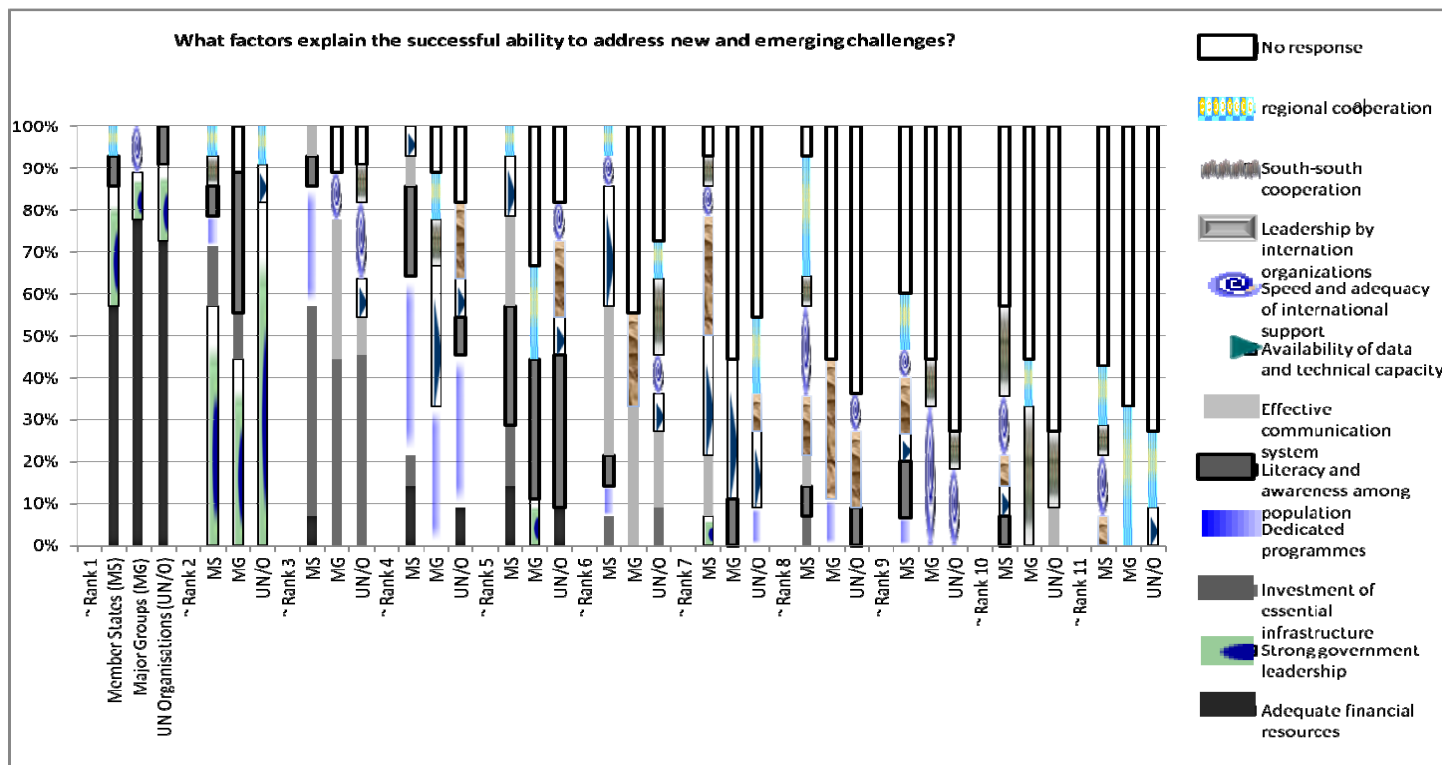
⁸⁴ Caribbean Regional Report for MSI+5.

⁸⁵ Philippines

⁸⁶ International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP).

⁸⁷ Key organizations of the Women’s Major Group.

Figure 5



53. One member State established a Sustainable Development Fund that coherently and predictably allocates funds for sustainable development projects and programmes.⁸⁸ Another established a National Fund on Climate Change, the first to use funds from the profits of an oil supply chain to finance mitigation and adaptation to climate change.⁸⁹ Still another highlighted implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, contribution to the Adaptation Fund, and commitment to “fast start finance” for addressing climate change in developing countries.⁹⁰ Multi-party democracy, implementation of a Common Market under the East Africa Community, and implementation of a Local Government reforms programme were cited by another as factors enhancing success.⁹¹

54. Major Groups also highlighted their influence on success factors, noting that, in India and Russia, strong emphasis is placed upon literacy and education of youth as future stakeholders and decision makers.⁹² The Barbados Workers’ Union

⁸⁸ Italy

⁸⁹ “Brazil set to meet low-carbon targets four years early”, Environment News Service, 27 Oct. 2010.

⁹⁰ Spain

⁹¹ Tanzania

⁹² World Aquarium and Conservation for the Oceans Foundation.

successfully urged its government to invest more in agriculture, halt using farmland for other uses, and support food production.⁹³

Challenges

55. Strengthening links among scientific research, education and policy through, *inter alia*, increasing political commitment to science-based education, increasing funding for research and innovation, emphasizing policy decisions based on both natural and social sciences, supporting technology development and transfer, maintaining the momentum of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development⁹⁴ and stimulating non-formal learning, especially by youth-led organizations⁹⁵ were all recommended. One member State reported recent success in increasing the number of science and engineering graduates, and their subsequent contributions to sustainable development.⁹⁶
56. A strengthened science-policy interface building upon the experiences carried out within MEAs could add value in other areas. Relevant national and regional experiences provide valuable input (e.g. NSDCs, the European Environment Agency's *European Environment State and Outlook Report 2010* consultation process, UNEP GEO, and others).⁹⁷
57. International support should better coordinate research, foster collaboration and dialogue, build partnerships and improve international governance, including reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions. Global science organizations, in cooperation with Governments and relevant UN system organizations, are taking steps to enhance the delivery of data, information and understanding on sustainable development challenges and on solutions, but these efforts need additional resources.⁹⁸ The UN system, in cooperation with other international organizations, is working with Governments to strengthen the statistical base for sustainable development decision making through refinement of the System of Environment and Economic Accounting.

Risks

58. The highest risks are to the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Increasing efforts in vulnerable countries should be prioritized through investment and targeted

⁹³ ITUC

⁹⁴ ICSU, NRDC.

⁹⁵ Children and Youth Major Group through the CSD Youth Caucus.

⁹⁶ Croatia

⁹⁷ EU comprehensive.

⁹⁸ ICSU

partnerships where capacity-building for resilience to external shocks is required: climate change mitigation and adaptation, rural and small-scale agriculture, diffusion of low-cost and low-tech solutions for energy and water provision, protection of marine and coastal resources and fisheries, investment in infrastructure, promotion of secure jobs, support for social safety nets, empowerment of women, recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, and addressing political conflict.

59. The risks to such vulnerable populations are addressed by national development plans in some countries,⁹⁹ but much more should be done to implement these through legislation and committed resources to support community-based policies and programmes that promote local solutions.¹⁰⁰ Development strategies should address not only potential risks and challenges in general, but must also specifically include assessment, including from a gender perspective, of the extent to which poor or vulnerable populations are likely to be affected.¹⁰¹

V. A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (GESDPE)

60. There is no agreement on a common definition of a green economy. While many expressed the view that a precise definition is not necessary, others observed that imprecision can be a source of dispute as, for example, when trading partners have different understandings of what constitutes a “green” product or production method.
61. It was widely agreed that discussions on a green economy leading to UNCS D should take the Rio Declaration and Principles as a fixed point of reference, and that doing so could address a number of concerns raised by member States and other stakeholders.
62. Another widely shared view was that GESDPE, to be a useful concept for all countries irrespective of level of development and resource endowment, must be sufficiently broad and flexible, and not based on rigid international rules or standards.

Experiences

63. Rather than seeking a single definition of green economy, it is more useful to look at the variety of approaches and national policies considered consistent with most

⁹⁹ Ecuador

¹⁰⁰ Tanzania

¹⁰¹ EU comprehensive.

understandings of a green economy, to assess how they contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Some member States underscored that green economy must not substitute for, but contribute to advancing sustainable development, reinforcing all three pillars. It should embrace both development and environment agendas and help create new jobs.¹⁰² Several member States stressed the importance of progress on the social pillar, with one referring to it as a litmus test of a green economy.¹⁰³ The Seventh African Development Forum (ADF-VII)¹⁰⁴ held in October 2010 agreed that “green economy” is an outcome-oriented concept deliberately aimed at improving human well-being without undermining the resource-base that current and future generations depend on for their livelihoods.

64. Many indicated the importance of developing green economy strategies at the regional and national levels involving different sectors and multiple stakeholders. The main benefit of a green economy strategy is strengthening the three pillars of sustainable development in a wide range of sectors. To have legitimacy, the concept of a green economy must be given content through consultation with and engagement of all stakeholders. A number of member States and Major Groups noted that there are as many ‘green economies’ as there are development paths, with no “one-size-fits-all” solution.¹⁰⁵
65. Differences exist on the relative emphasis to be accorded to different types of green economy policies – e.g., internalization of environmental externalities in prices, taxes and subsidies, public expenditures on green infrastructure and technologies – but there is broad agreement that some sectors clearly belong to any working concept of a green economy, including renewable energy, energy and material efficiency improvements, and sustainable buildings. Many also agree on the importance of a supportive fiscal policy framework.
66. It was widely noted that green economy policies could save energy, reduce emissions, utilize resources more efficiently and open new areas of economic development. As one member State noted, green development would strike a balance between social and economic development and resource and environmental conservation, thereby contributing to the MDGs.¹⁰⁶
67. Most emerging economies have some policies in place that relate to the GESDPE, although these vary considerably in terms of their degree of ambition and impact: in the Republic of Korea and China, the “green” share of national stimulus packages

¹⁰² GA65 Second Committee General Debate, Statement by Serbia.

¹⁰³ Brazil, Belgium, others

¹⁰⁴ www.uneca.org/adfvii

¹⁰⁵ India, ITUC, others

¹⁰⁶ Chinese Delegation Talking Points on Green Economy for 1st Intersessional of UNCSD

was among the highest in the world. In South Africa and twenty other developing countries, renewable energy feed-in tariffs have been approved or are being developed, and in Brazil, considerable government support, both financial and non-financial, has been provided for biofuels.¹⁰⁷ Putting a price on pollution through economic policy instruments, such as environmental taxes and emissions trading schemes, was cited by several Member States¹⁰⁸ as one of the most effective ways of promoting a green economy. Policies that strengthen incentives for stakeholders to adopt more sustainable production and consumption choices were also emphasized.¹⁰⁹

68. Strong national political leadership is recognized as important to transition to a green economy, projecting green economy as a vision and engaging the private sector and all of society in its realization.¹¹⁰
69. Legislation and institutions must be effective while limiting the administrative burden on businesses. There is great potential for spreading green technology through the development of standards. However, the challenge lies in striking a balance between drafting environmental standards and preventing the creation of new barriers to international trade, particularly trade with developing countries. One member State stressed the need for further work on the trade and development aspects of environmental standards, including labelling and certification schemes, to find international solutions that support environmental and climate objectives while facilitating trade and development.¹¹¹
70. Supported by a conducive policy framework, public and private investments provide mechanisms for reconfiguration of businesses, infrastructure and institutions towards greater energy and resource efficiency and lower pollution and waste intensity, through adoption of sustainable consumption and production processes. Such reconfiguration should lead to more green jobs, and lower the energy and materials intensities of production, waste and pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.¹¹²
71. Job creation is an important objective of South Africa's plan to shift to a new resource-efficient, low-carbon, pro-employment growth path¹¹³. Republic of Korea

¹⁰⁷ WWF

¹⁰⁸ Finland, Poland, Tanzania.

¹⁰⁹ Finland, CBD, others.

¹¹⁰ Korea

¹¹¹ Sweden

¹¹² UNEP

¹¹³ South Africa

too has adopted similar strategies for “green jobs”.¹¹⁴ The Green Jobs Study¹¹⁵ notes four ways in which green economy measures may affect employment: (i) creation of additional jobs – e.g., in manufacturing pollution-control devices and environmental consulting services; (ii) substitution between jobs – e.g., in renewable energy instead of fossil fuels; (iii) elimination of some jobs without direct replacement, as when packaging materials are discouraged or banned and their production discontinued; (iv) reorientation and re-skilling of many existing jobs, notably in construction.

72. The synergies between environmental policies and job creation should be explored in national experiences, with participation of governments, professional associations, civil society, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions and research entities.¹¹⁶ One member State noted a policy target to create 1.4 million new environmental jobs through green innovation.¹¹⁷ Green jobs could also be created for installing and operating green technologies and capital equipment – e.g. for improved energy, water and other resource efficiency, and for solar, wind and other renewable energy sources.
73. Most countries do not yet have an overall strategy for a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Some countries and regional groups are in the early stages of planning such strategies, and some UN System organizations are committed to advancing and supporting green economy initiatives through advisory and technical assistance services.¹¹⁸
74. Green economy measures should not be limited only to promoting “green sectors”, but should also support “greening” “brown” sectors such as energy, petroleum and other extractive industries, chemical industries, automotive industry, etc., and develop new sectors with relatively low environmental impact and high social benefits, notably some services. Most emphasis was given to the energy, agriculture, transport and housing sectors as having the greatest impact.

Success factors

75. The most effective green economy policies include: fiscal incentives and reform, regulation and legislation, and green procurement, notably for promotion of more resource-efficient and low-emission technologies, scaling-up renewable energies and energy efficiency, and stimulating development of green products.

¹¹⁴ Republic of Korea

¹¹⁵ UNEP, ILO, *et al.* (2008).

¹¹⁶ Brazil

¹¹⁷ Japan

¹¹⁸ UNEP, UNIDO, Statement by the Republic of Korea (GA65 Second Committee Agenda Item 20).

76. Successful policies have been brought forward when the longer term case for strong measures is made clearly, and the policies themselves are well thought through and coordinated with other policies.¹¹⁹ A consultative, bottom-up approach that includes transparent communication, Government leadership and broad multi-stakeholder engagement, particularly involving youth, is needed to build support for green economy policies. Careful design of such policies for social equity is essential. The media is also a powerful tool that can help shape public perception and increase support. Availability of relevant institutional or technical capacity is important for policy design and implementation.¹²⁰
77. Experiences with explicitly linking poverty eradication and social development with environmental policies and programmes predate the green economy discussion. These, such as the UN Poverty-Environment Initiative, offer useful lessons.¹²¹
78. The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production should also be considered a major response to the need for green economies worldwide while addressing social concerns.¹²² UNCSO must then ensure that resources, technical assistance, and technology transfer are made available to enable countries to participate competitively in a global “green” marketplace, and to ensure that “green” industries will also generate jobs and improve livelihoods and reduce inequality both within and between countries.¹²³

Challenges

79. Major challenges include: a global commitment and common understanding of GESDPE that encapsulates all aspects of global sustainability; developing a UN Green Economy Road Map that clarifies and stimulates the transitional steps needed at the national and international level,¹²⁴ and a toolbox or best practice guide to actions, instruments and policies to advance GESDPE; and realizing explicit financial commitments, such as the bilateral financial contributions of USD30 million in 2009 and USD250 million through 2015 by Norway to Guyana.¹²⁵
80. Developing country respondents emphasized the imperative for developed countries to make enabling resources—financial and technological—available to developing

¹¹⁹ Sustainable Development Commission

¹²⁰ Spain, UK, Croatia, Stakeholder Forum.

¹²¹ www.unpei.org; also UNDP’s International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (<http://www.ipc-undp.org/>).

¹²² EU comprehensive.

¹²³ ECLAC

¹²⁴ EU

¹²⁵ Caribbean Regional Report for MSI+5 Review.

countries in an affordable and transparent manner to achieve a gradual transition to a green economy.¹²⁶ A commitment of an agreed percentage of GDP or national budgets to GESDPE investments, and a tax on financial transactions for GESDPE, along with regional Green Investment Forums where green entrepreneurs and business could be connected with financial institutions, were suggested by one UN organization.¹²⁷ Access to micro-financing mechanisms for small-scale projects by local communities, particularly women, was proposed by several Major Groups.¹²⁸ One member State noted sustainability depends on the “ability to mobilize green financing to make environmentally friendly technology available to those for whom the latest technology remains financially prohibitive.”¹²⁹

81. The role of intellectual property rights (IPRs) – specifically the TRIPS agreement – in relation to green technologies was mentioned. Some were concerned that IPRs could limit technology diffusion and transfer, while others referred to their positive contribution in this regard.¹³⁰

Risks

82. The risk of conflict between green economy policies and those related to other areas stems from real and perceived trade-offs between economic and environmental outcomes. Concerns were raised regarding the costs of new, green investments and how they would be financed. Also, potential conflicts were cited between a green economy and free trade, if for example “green protectionism” were to be pursued in the name of promoting a green economy.¹³¹ Developing countries oppose the introduction of any new conditionalities in connection with a green economy that might generate “unjustified restrictions in the areas of trade, financing and official development assistance”.¹³² While there is a need to remove environmentally harmful subsidies, environmentally helpful subsidies also risk becoming a growing focus of trade disputes.
83. The greatest risk arises from resisting the scale of changes required as suggested by the best available science – that is, the risk of inaction.¹³³

¹²⁶ Tanzania, India, Montenegro.

¹²⁷ UNEP

¹²⁸ Key organizations of the Women’s major group, World Aquarium and Conservation for the Oceans Foundation.

¹²⁹ GA65 Second Committee Statement by Seychelles.

¹³⁰ Argentina, India, WWF, Japan.

¹³¹ India

¹³² South Africa, Argentina, China, others.

¹³³ One Earth

VI. Institutional framework for sustainable development

84. UNCSD will provide an opportunity for agreement on an ambitious and effective IEG reform package and on strengthening the broader institutional framework for sustainable development. Since Rio, many UN bodies and international organizations have aligned their work with the principles of sustainable development, which is referred to in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (GA Resolution A/RES/06/1) as “a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities”.

85. One member State emphasized that the global institutional architecture should address global challenges such as desertification, climate change, and biodiversity loss in a way that remains firmly anchored on the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”.¹³⁴

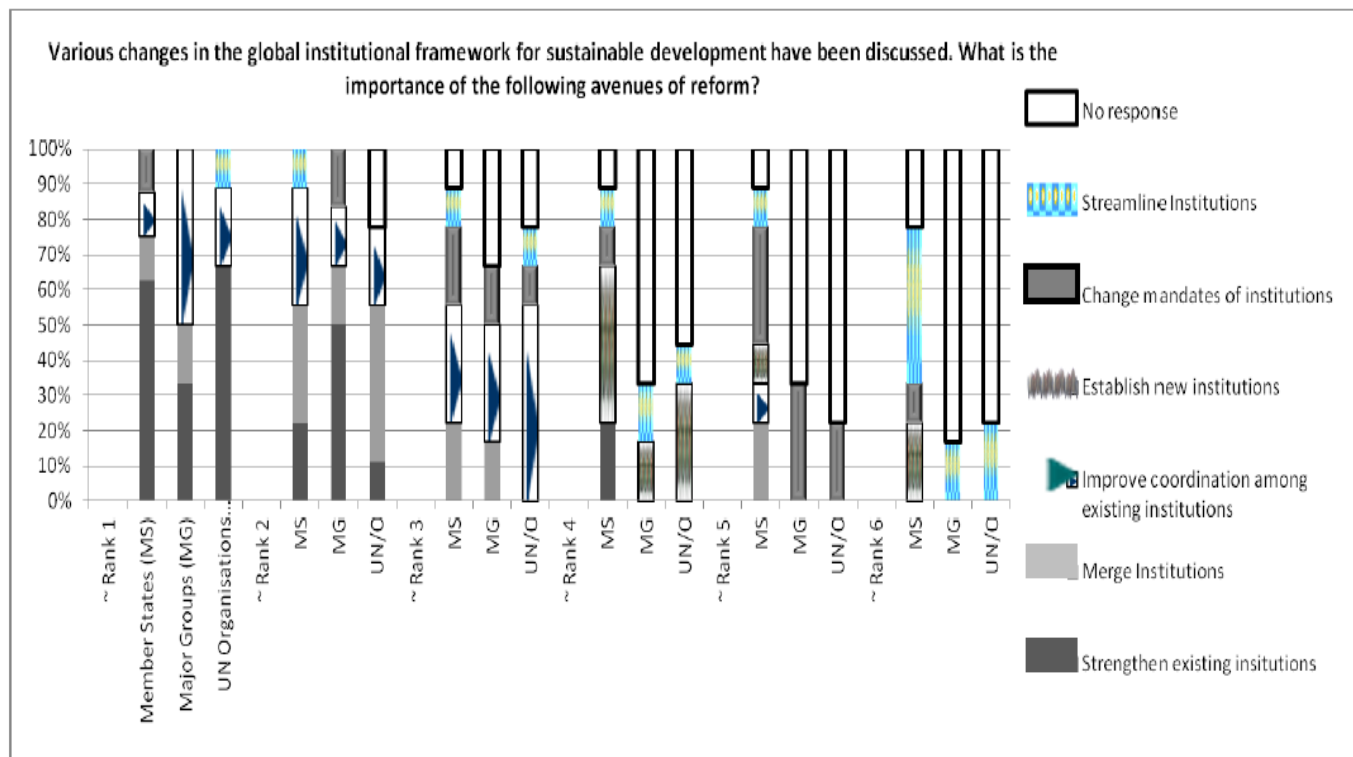
Experiences

86. The majority of member States and UN system organizations ranked “strengthen existing institutions” highest while the majority of Major Groups ranked “improve coordination among existing institutions” as most important (Figure 6) avenue for reform of the global institutional framework for sustainable development. Among the avenues for strengthening existing institutions, vesting them with appropriate monitoring responsibilities and mechanisms was mentioned.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ India

¹³⁵ South Africa

Figure 6



87. To ensure effective coordination among different agencies and organizations, some favour merging institutions, suggesting formation of a single World Environment Organisation or merging the CSD into an expanded UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with a stronger mandate for promoting sustainable development throughout the UN family, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. One member State called for strengthening ECOSOC as an effective forum for the multilateral discussion of economic and social themes through a sustainable development approach.¹³⁶ An International Court for the Environment (ICE) was proposed by some Major Groups to address the lack of legal authority in the current system with regard to enforcing sustainable development strategies and MEAs.¹³⁷ One regional group stated that creation of new institutions should be a last resort, but could be desirable if it entails the merging of institutions with complementary mandates.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Brazil

¹³⁷ Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

¹³⁸ ECA

88. Some member States suggested that UNEP reform should strengthen its capacity and leadership to ensure UN system delivery to member States on the environmental pillar of sustainable development.¹³⁹ Some member States supported the upgrading of UNEP to a specialized agency for the environment. One member State emphasized that both UNEP and CSD should be strengthened to reinforce all three pillars of sustainable development.¹⁴⁰
89. Many suggested the need for better coordination, alignment and collaboration among UN institutions,¹⁴¹ including better utilization of existing UN coordination mechanisms. The latter should be supported by more coherent messaging from governments across the governing boards of different agencies.¹⁴²
90. Some MEAs have made progress towards achieving greater synergies, notably in the chemicals and waste domain (e.g. the clustering the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm convention secretariats¹⁴³) as well as at the intersection of forests, biodiversity and climate change.
91. All UN agencies are taking steps to operate as one system by harmonizing related programmes and dealing with national governments through the UN “Delivering as One” initiative, which was launched in 2007 in eight pilot countries with a ninth joining in 2009.¹⁴⁴ The CSD should be able to leverage the results of this new initiative as a platform for building the needed synergies for a more co-ordinated implementation of sustainable development at national levels.¹⁴⁵
92. A number of recent improvements, such as greater use of the Environmental Management Group, UN-Water, and UN-Energy, were cited by one member State as helping to identify and implement synergistic activity among existing instruments and actors; it was also suggested that reinvigoration of the concept of the Inter-Agency Coordination on Sustainable Development might further improve coordination within the UN system.¹⁴⁶
93. One member State has advanced a proposal for an “umbrella” structure within the UN focused on the promotion of sustainable development and implementation of

¹³⁹ GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20, Statements by Germany, Mexico, Serbia and Norway.

¹⁴⁰ Brazil

¹⁴¹ South Africa

¹⁴² UNDP

¹⁴³ Serbia

¹⁴⁴ *How Delivering as One Adds Value: Stories and Testimonies from Eight Programme Pilot Countries* (June 2010). http://www.undg.org/docs/11313/DaO-Thematic-Report_final.pdf; Montenegro.

¹⁴⁵ Japan, International Maritime Organization, and others.

¹⁴⁶ USA

multilateral commitments. This would serve to coordinate existing institutions, notably ECOSOC, UNEP, and CSD, as well as the MEAs. It stressed the role of UNEP in helping countries to strengthen their capacities in the environmental domain, and in that regard urged implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building. It noted that the structural arrangement of UN-Women could provide a model for discussion.¹⁴⁷

94. At the regional level, there are several instances of cooperation among UN institutions. The UN regional commissions have been coordinating closely to produce joint analysis as input to the UNCSD preparations. UN agencies are working together in the African region to assist NEPAD. It was suggested that, while the experience of the regional implementation meetings has been positive, the regional commissions could be further integrated into the CSD process.¹⁴⁸
95. At the national level, one member State noted that the diversity of contexts makes any “blueprint” for the institutional framework neither desirable nor feasible.¹⁴⁹ In most developing countries, co-ordination of policy development and implementation across relevant agencies remains a challenge.¹⁵⁰ Most countries report that active NSDCs are in place, and that they include participation of major groups and other stakeholders, although youth are still underrepresented in many cases.¹⁵¹ Those that do not have an NSDC in place reported on various types of inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms. It is agreed that involvement of NSDCs in countries’ preparations for UNCSD would be useful and should be promoted.
96. The overall effectiveness of NSDS depends on many factors – economic, social, environmental – and on effective governance within national circumstances. Those that have been effective embody participatory approaches in development and implementation, effectively integrate the different dimensions of sustainable development, and are adequately resourced. National Development Plans (NDPs) and Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategies (GPRS), linked to budget processes and contextualized within a country’s long-term vision for sustainable development, as well as strategically linked to sectoral plans and complemented by sub-national plans, could be quite effective.¹⁵²
97. Often, the scope of an NSDS is too narrow, focusing solely on environmental issues. Cultural, political and socio-economic aspects are not always adequately

¹⁴⁷ Brazil

¹⁴⁸ Joint Statement on behalf of the Regional Commissions at the 1st Intersessional Meeting of UNCSD

¹⁴⁹ Brazil

¹⁵⁰ Mauritius, others.

¹⁵¹ Children and Youth Major Group through UNCSD Youth Caucus.

¹⁵² ECA report on NSDS at www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/sdd/documents/.

reflected. For example, while all the Pacific SIDS have an NSDS or a planning process that adheres to principles of sustainable development, the Five-year Review of the MSI suggests that the integrated planning process needs improvement.¹⁵³ Most NSDSs in West Asia have failed to identify the optimum institutional and administrative arrangements needed to coordinate and implement their action plans, which are often not compatible with other sector strategies.¹⁵⁴

98. To support NSDS implementation, one member State suggested the establishment of an independent peer review mechanism drawing upon expertise from member States that would help countries in identifying gaps and addressing challenges faced in implementing sustainable development goals and targets.¹⁵⁵
99. Sub-national and local governments play a critical role in integrating national sustainable development policies into practical local programmes for urban and rural planning and management, along with fostering community and civil society participation in these programmes.¹⁵⁶ Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 emphasized the important role of local authorities in promoting sustainable development at the local level. Since 1992, thousands of municipalities throughout the world have formulated and implemented Local Agenda 21 strategies, although they may not always be identified as such, having evolved and refocused their activities under different programmes.
100. Participation of Major Groups in national decision-making processes on sustainable development has significantly increased since 1992. Participation in policy development ranked as the most common form of engagement overall, followed by public hearings, partnerships, and inclusion in scientific panels. Most UN system organizations also ranked multi-stakeholder consultations for international meetings high on the list (Figure 7).

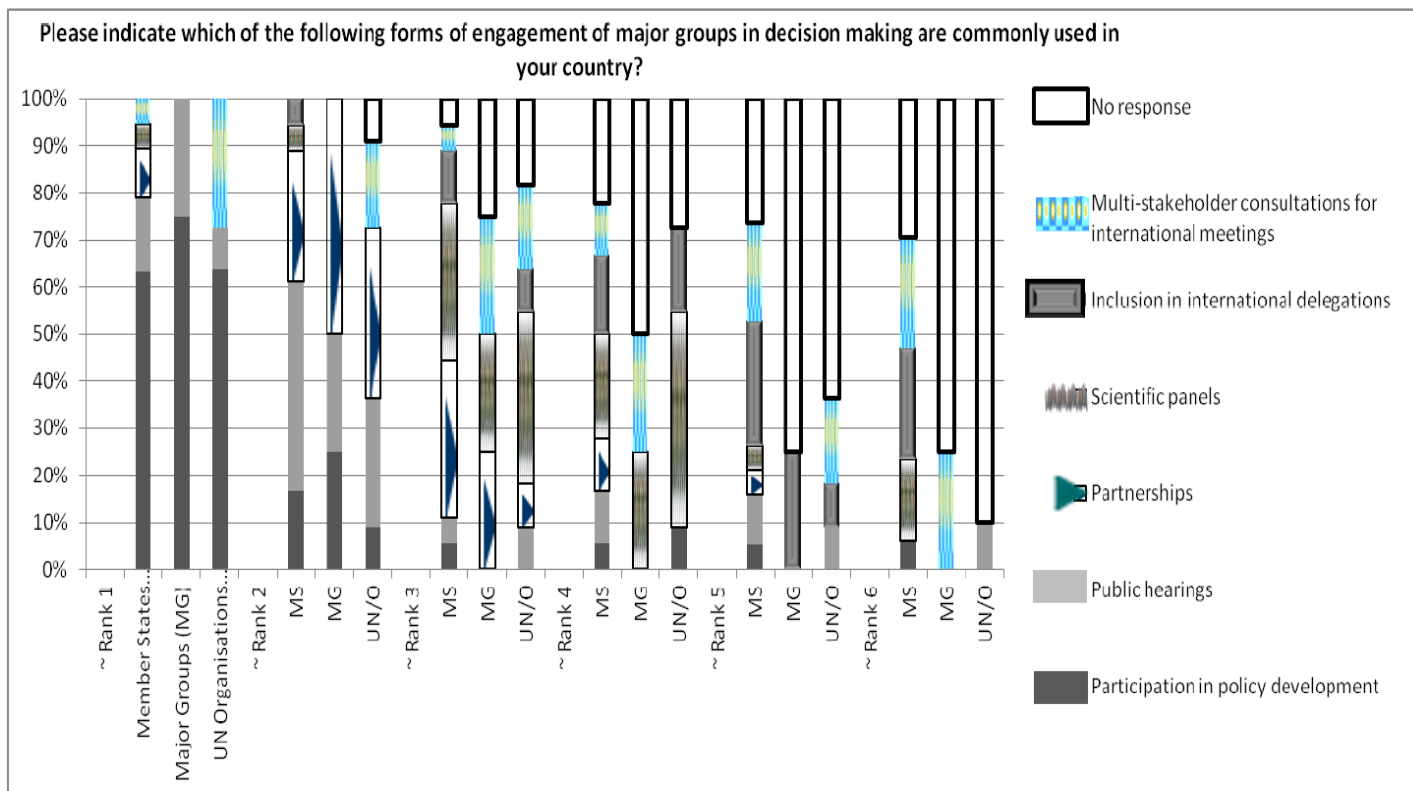
¹⁵³ ESCAP

¹⁵⁴ ESCWA

¹⁵⁵ South Africa

¹⁵⁶ GA65 Second Committee, Agenda Item 20, Statement by Israel.

Figure 7



101. Almost all member States reported close collaboration with NGOs. Developed countries more often reported collaboration with trade unions, local authorities, business and industry, and the scientific and technological community. Developing countries more often cited collaboration with women, indigenous people, and farmers. Youth are consulted in fewer instances, but were mentioned by both developed and developing countries as well as UN organizations. The latter tend to reach out to all nine major group sectors based on the spectrum of their activities, but most often reported collaboration with business and industry or the scientific and technological community.

102. Major Groups generally collaborate with the country or countries of interest to their organization, and also reported on collaboration with UN Organizations, as well as with each other. The increased collaboration among some Major Groups themselves at the international level is an important development and strengthens their role and voice in international sustainable development institutions.

Success factors

103. Systematic institutional and governance reforms at national, regional and international levels are essential to achieve sustainable development. Examples of effective institutional frameworks contributing to significant positive outcomes include the MDGs, creation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the organization of International Council on Mining and Metals, the DESD, the Aarhus Convention,¹⁵⁷ and the effective use of regional commissions.
104. Relevant lessons include recommendations to build on existing institutions; promote collaboration, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness in partnerships; and ensure meaningful and equitable public access to international fora related to sustainable development by adapting and structuring their processes in a way that promotes transparency and facilitates the participation of those groups that might not have the means for participation without encouragement and support.
105. The CSD should strengthen its collaboration with regional commissions and others for decision-making and for leveraging the participation of various UN agencies and funds in implementing intergovernmental decisions. While the CSD has had a good track record of involving civil society in its deliberations, it should make additional efforts to involve developing country civil society organizations.¹⁵⁸ Several responses noted that the CSD is tasked with too broad an array of policy issues that might be better integrated throughout other relevant bodies. At the same time, its function as a sustainable development forum could be enhanced by giving increased importance to side events, the learning centre, and informal meetings.¹⁵⁹
106. A number of specific lessons from experience at the national level were drawn: greater institutional strengthening through capacity building is needed; even strong institutions cannot deliver sustainable development in the absence of appropriate and effective coordination mechanisms; and to be effective, coordination mechanisms should be led or chaired by strong cross-sector ministries such as finance or planning.¹⁶⁰
107. These lessons could be relevant to CSD in the sense that CSD attracts only certain parts of governments and that finance and planning ministers/ministries are not among the more frequent participants. On the other hand, the growing prominence of climate change and green economy on the international agenda has

¹⁵⁷ ECE, Stakeholder Forum.

¹⁵⁸ India

¹⁵⁹ Sweden

¹⁶⁰ UNDP

begun to place the sustainable development agenda more centrally on economic ministries' radar screens.

108. Partnership, dialogue and public participation through consultative processes, often through NSDCs, were highlighted as highly effective means of strengthening Major Groups' participation in national sustainable development efforts. Most Major Groups and UN System organizations responded that provision of the basic financial, human and technical advisory resources to support stakeholder groups to undertake sustainable development projects is paramount.¹⁶¹ Bringing in those most affected by policies and decisions to speak on their own behalf,¹⁶² involving them in concrete implementation of projects, giving them occasion to set the agenda and have a formal role in decision-making processes are important.¹⁶³ Local governments often do not have the constitutional and legislative authority or ability to raise resources necessary to address issues that directly impact upon their communities. Increased national political commitment to Local Agenda 21 would strengthen local authorities' and other major groups' participation in sustainable development efforts.¹⁶⁴ The Aarhus Convention was cited as one of the most effective means of strengthening participation, as it guarantees any person the right of access information and participation in decision-making.¹⁶⁵

Challenges

109. Some major challenges facing international institutions include: lack of political will, institutional capacity, and technical capability; high competition for inadequate financial resources during a global financial crisis; complexity and scope of the sustainable development agenda; lack of coordination among organisations and agencies; low accountability and conflicting interests; competing short-term versus long-term priorities; weak or non-existent monitoring, reporting and evaluation; creating effective and flexible partnership platforms that facilitate North-South and South-South two-way knowledge sharing.¹⁶⁶
110. Some major challenges facing national institutions include: lack of mandate or high-level political commitment to engage stakeholders; weak engagement of Major Groups, particularly women and youth; ensuring effective and continuous inter-ministerial cooperation; varied commitments of countries to root sustainable development in national institutions; achieving a balanced distribution of financial

¹⁶¹ ITUC, IMO

¹⁶² Key organizations of Women's major group.

¹⁶³ ITUC, WWF, UNIDO

¹⁶⁴ UN-HABITAT

¹⁶⁵ Italy, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, UNECE.

¹⁶⁶ Caribbean Regional Report for the MSI+5.

resources; ensuring coordination between local and national institutions; inefficient and wasteful patterns of consumption and production. .

Risks

111. The main risks to a successful outcome at UNCSD relates to insufficient political will to reform the existing institutional framework, North-South and other divisions, and overall lack of commitment to cooperate at the international level.
112. For some, it is too early to state clearly what decision should be taken at UNCSD on the overarching sustainable development framework, but most agree that UNCSD will provide an opportunity for agreement on an IEG reform package. Others proposed decisions involving restoring the institutional balance among the three pillars and strengthening capacities to ensure effective implementation; providing a strong and predictable financial basis for action; ensuring effective participation by civil society in decision making functions; and aiming to reach agreement on elevating the lead responsibility for sustainable development at the international level to the highest decision making levels of the multilateral system.
113. Some noted that the regional commissions' leading role in coordinating regional and sub-regional activities towards sustainable development, as per chapter 38 of Agenda 21, must be preserved and strengthened within the context of reforms to the international institutional framework for sustainable development. Opportunities provided by existing regional and sub-regional institutions should be leveraged.

VII. The Way Forward

114. The questionnaire responses contain a number of useful suggestions and recommendations for consideration in the preparatory process for UNCSD. Those are summarized in a separate document posted at: www.uncsd2010.org. Here, areas of apparent convergence are noted as well as those where further discussion is needed to narrow differences at the 2nd Preparatory Committee Meeting.

Renewed political commitment for sustainable development

115. The Intersessional Meeting reaffirmed political commitment to the Rio Principles and ensuring their more consistent and effective application. Further discussion is required on how the UNCSD will:
 - Foster integrated decision making based on sustainable development principles as a whole-of-government undertaking
 - Support a post-2015 MDG framework focused on sustainable development

- Further enhance awareness-raising and transparency in information sharing
- Ensure corporate social and environmental responsibility in private sector decision making.

Assessment of progress and remaining gaps

116. The process of developing integrated NSDSs has advanced. While mainstreaming sustainable development into economic planning processes is widely supported, further actions are needed to:

- Ensure that national budget allocations adequately reflect sustainable development priorities
- Deepen work on sustainable development indicators, including the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting
- Include assessments of effects on poor and vulnerable populations
- Institutionalize more inclusive access to information by poor and vulnerable groups
- Increase investments in science and technology and build technological capabilities in all countries
- Strengthen regulations and incentives for sustainable production and consumption
- Phase out environmentally harmful subsidies.

New and emerging issues

117. The importance of strengthening international support for and capacity building in countries most vulnerable to emerging sustainable development threats like climate change is unquestioned. However, more effort is needed to:

- Enhance early warning, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction
- Increase capacity building to protect biodiversity and ecosystems
- Raise agricultural productivity sustainably and ensure food security
- Slow deforestation and extend sustainable forest management
- Address challenges of rapid urbanization in developing countries
- Strengthen links among scientific research, education, and policy
- Ensure scientific research incorporates local knowledge.

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

118. There is no consensus definition or model of a green economy. Rather, approaches will differ with national priorities and policy contexts. Green economy must be understood in relation to the Rio Declaration and Principles, and the development and poverty eradication agendas remain central for developing

countries. Progress on sustainable consumption and production can contribute significantly to a green economy.

119. Areas where there is need for further analysis and discussion include:

- Green sectors as new growth drivers: what are the opportunities for different groups of countries and how can they seize them?
- Scaling up investments in green infrastructure, green energy and other sectors: what are the options for mobilizing international investment?
- Institutions and policies to support a green economy: how to strengthen government capacities to design and implement fiscal incentives, regulation and legislation, sustainable procurement, and policies to support green industries as new growth drivers?
- Transition costs, particularly in resource-dependent economies: what are the needs of countries to minimize economic adjustment costs?
- Green economy and poverty eradication: how can green economy policies and measures best contribute to poverty eradication and social development?
- Green economy and technology: how can all countries be assured affordable access to technologies needed for a green economy?
- Green economy and trade: how to enhance the development potential of environmental standards and labelling, to meet environmental and climate objectives while promoting development and trade.

Institutional framework for sustainable development

120. Most agreed that the institutional framework for sustainable development requires strengthening, including better coordination among existing international institutions. Further progress is also needed at regional and national levels.

121. Areas for further analysis and discussion include:

- International Environmental Governance (IEG): there is strong support for strengthening UNEP, with a range of options having been proposed
- Sustainable development governance: options proposed include: enhancing the CSD's effectiveness in supporting implementation; strengthening ECOSOC as an effective forum for multilateral discussion of the sustainable development agenda; creating an umbrella structure for sustainable development within the UN
- Enhancing co-ordination, coherence and cooperation: options include building on the chemicals and waste conventions model; better utilizing existing UN coordination mechanisms; reinvigorating the Inter-Agency Coordination on Sustainable Development
- Strengthening the regional commissions' leading role in coordinating regional and sub-regional activities for sustainable development, as per chapter 38 of Agenda 21

- At national level, creating or strengthening institutional mechanisms for joint work and collaboration across social, economic and environmental portfolios
- Strengthening capacities of local authorities, including for resource mobilization, as key actors in delivery of vital economic, environmental and social services
- Building upon progress to date for multi-stakeholder engagement in sustainable development decision making and implementation, including through capacity building tailored to different Major Groups and stakeholders.